

## Midwifery Process Paper

My history fair project focuses on the marginalization of midwifery, sparked by my interest in feverish behavior around childbirth in the 18th century. Through my research, I examined the fluctuating rights and responsibilities of midwives over a 400-year period.

Initially, I planned to explore how gender impacted childbirth in the 17th-18th century. However, I found limited credible sources and I struggled to explicitly outline the rights and responsibilities. Rather than starting over, I shifted focus to the perspective of midwives. This allowed more information to become available and a timeline began to take form. But, women's history is often under-documented, leading to difficulties finding scholarly sources. To counter this, I used keywords from existing sources to find new ones. My most valuable source from, *Medical Law International*, by Sarah Fox and Margaret Brazier, was called "The regulation of Midwives in England". This was the foundation of my project and centered my topic on the medical, social, and statutory rights and responsibilities of midwives. The co-author Sarah Fox also wrote the book *Childbirth In Eighteenth Century Europe*, Which offered an in-depth analysis of the labor process. While conducting my research, my primary goal was to develop a basic understanding of the change of midwives rights and responsibilities over time and compare it to male midwives rights and responsibilities over time. Finding an interviewee was challenging as many experts were unreachable or had passed away. The ones that I was able to contact never responded, so I shifted my focus from historians to practicing midwives and landed an interview with Lauren Carratu. The interview solidified my understanding and gave a current perspective on the occupation.

For my website, I categorized my research into 5 main chronological groups that focused on the different aspects of my topic: 17th-century midwives, 18th-Century Male Midwives, the Midwives Act of 1902, The Power Shift, and The World. These categories allowed me to explain both the historical developments and the thematic significance of midwifery.

From the 4th century, midwives have been trusted to deliver children safely, but the 18th century marks the introduction of the medical men or the 'man midwife'. Medical men in Europe disempowered midwives and lessened their rights and responsibilities with the increased necessity of formal education. In turn, medical men easily took over the profession. The transfer of power emphasizes the change in the practice of childbirth at this time. This had long-term effects on women's roles in healthcare, the medicalization of the practice, and the nature of childbirth.

This time period offers insight into how the changing global dynamics shaped the medical world and serves as a case study of how women's roles were marginalized to allow men to progress in their occupation. Despite midwifery being female dominated today, many practices instated by male midwives still influence the occupation. My project observes the marginalization of midwifery over time, demonstrating how gender and medical practices shaped and impacted women's roles in childbirth.